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Chain of Command 3

From time to time during the presidential campaign, General Eisenhower was criticized because he had always operated as an executive through the military "chain-of-command" system. The suggestion was that this way of doing was not only worthless but might even be a dangerous handicap to a civilian executive.

Under this arrangement, Eisenhower customarily relied heavily on his chiefs of staff in his periods of most notable service. In World War II, Gen. Walter Bedell Smith, now head of the Central Intelligence Agency, filled that spot for Ike. In his tenure with NATO, the general leaned on Gen. Alfred M. Gruenther.

Eisenhower's selection of Gov. Sherman Adams of New Hampshire to be his chief assistant in the White House discloses the general's evident intent to repeat the pattern. Adams served virtually in the capacity of personal chief of staff to Ike throughout the campaign. In that role he won the general's supreme confidence.

It is fair to ask, therefore, whether the prospect of this organizational set-up is really so frightening as some critics of "a military man in the White House" hinted.

The chances are that it is not. The President of the United States is the most overburdened man in the nation, if not the world. Though the law today provides him with a chief assistant, six administration aides, armed service aides, three secretaries and

a special counsel, he still must decide each day what things he will do of the many he could do.

Undoubtedly he has not yet shed all the routine tasks he should to be properly free for his crucial policy-making decisions. More of his time ought to be saved by having his problems sorted out so the lesser ones fall to lesser hands, and by having terse summarizations given him on those he himself must solve.

This, obviously, is the very field in which a chief of staff, civilian - style, can perhaps operate so usefully. A highly qualified assistant can keep the President's mind functioning on the big issues, where his personal decision is critical. In most cases he can save him volumes of reading by briefing the Chief Executive effectively.

Far from being frightening, such an arrangement ought to be welcomed. With one note of caution: If the President's mind is to be big, if he is to think courageously and originally, he cannot depend wholly on tight summaries of the great problems. He must find time to make himself a student of those problems and their frame of history, government, morality, and the like.

Only thus can he bring to his decisions the full benefits of the detachment which is the goal of the sort of improved executive organization heralded by Adams' appointment. Only thus can the complete measure of the greatest office in the world be realized.